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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 08 TEL AVIV 001460

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

Please note: no Israel Media Reaction Thursday, April 13, Passover holiday.

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- 11. Iran: Nuclear Program
- 12. Mideast
- 13. Aftermath of Italian Elections

Key stories in the media:

All media led with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's announcement in Mashhad on Tuesday that Iran has successfully enriched uranium for the first time and "joined the club of nuclear countries." Israel Radio quoted American officials as saying that the concentration of the uranium produced by Iran is low and it cannot be used to make nuclear weapons. IDF Intelligence head Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot that Iran will have a nuclear weapon in three years. Yadlin was also quoted as saying in Ha'aretz that he hopes the international community "does not fall into the new trap that Iran has set", and that it "accelerates the processes to stop the program." In the same interview, he was quoted as saying that Israel and the West do not know everything about Iran. Israel Radio quoted Shimon Peres, No. 2 in Kadima, as saying that Israel could be left on its own if it made hasty decisions regarding Iran. Peres was quoted as saying that Israel should let the US manage the Iranian issue. Israel Radio quoted Israel's National Security Adviser Giora Eiland as saying that Iran has an alternative nuclear program. Ha'aretz and Israel Radio quoted White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan as saying aboard Air Force

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One when en route to Missouri: "Defiant statements and actions only further isolate the regime from the rest of the world." Ha'aretz and Israel Radio quoted Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as saying that he would not engage in "fantasyland" speculation about a possible US attack on Iran, though he said that the Bush administration is concerned about Tehran's nuclear ambitions. He was quoted as saying: "The United States of America is on a diplomatic track."

Israel Radio quoted Interim PM Ehud Olmert as saying in an interview with The Wall Street Journal that he intends to complete the shaping of his plan for a pullout from territories in the West Bank in a year and a half, and that during his visit to Washington next month he will try to convince the US administration to accept an outline of his plan.

Israel Radio reported that last night, the IAF raided the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades' office in Gaza. Major media quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying on Tuesday that Israel must intensify its activities in the Gaza Strip, since the Hamas government has not taken action to stop cells launching Qassam rockets from the Strip into Israel. Ha'aretz reported that on

Tuesday, PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas severely criticized Israel for the recent artillery barrage. Ha'aretz reported that five human rights groups asked Mofaz to reverse a decision that reduces the "safety zone" that artillery batteries must maintain around Palestinian communities to 100 meters, saying it endangers civilians. The Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio reported that on Tuesday in Tel Aviv, approximately 100 left-wing activists from the groups Gush Shalom and the Women's Peace Coalition demonstrated against the shelling of Gaza communities, ending their march opposite the US Embassy.

Leading media reported that FM Tzipi Livni's comments in an interview with ABC-TV that suicide bombers who target soldiers are not terrorists came under fire from right-wing politicians. The Jerusalem Post noted that her remarks touched a raw nerve with the IDF, and that Justice Ministry officials claimed Tuesday that her distinction was not based on any existing classification.

Ha'aretz quoted US Ambassador to Israel Richard Jones as saying on Tuesday at a press conference in Tel Aviv that the only way to determine permanent borders between Israel and the Palestinians was through negotiations. Ha'aretz quoted Ambassador Jones as saying, in response to a reporter's question as to whether the US administration supports Olmert's convergence plan, that the US continues to support the Roadmap and negotiations. The Ambassador was quoted as saying that he believes this is Olmert and Kadima's approach, too, and that they prefer a negotiated agreement. Jones was quoted as saying that the way in which any unilateral Israeli move would be viewed by the US remains to be seen, but that at this stage the US supports an agreement through negotiations and that its policies are designed to encourage the PA to be a partner for peace. The Jerusalem Post quoted Ambassador Jones as saying that the US "understands" Israel's policy of not transferring tax and customs revenues to the PA. The Jerusalem Post said that the Ambassador's remark places the US at odds with Europe over this matter. Hatzofe quoted Jones as saying that the United States' basic aid to the Palestinians will increase by 57 percent, reaching USD 245 million this year. Hatzofe quoted the Ambassador as saying that the US will allot USD 42 million to strengthen Palestinian civil society and independent Palestinian institutions, and that the aid will be provided through USAID and local NGOs.

Ha'aretz reported that on Tuesday, the US and other permanent members of the UN Security Council rejected a draft statement that Arab states wanted the council's president to make, condemning Israeli military actions in the Gaza Strip but failing to mention Palestinian rocket fire.

Israel Radio reported that on Tuesday in Ramallah, Luisa Morgantini, chairperson of the European Parliament's development committee, met with Palestinian Legislative Council Speaker Abdel Aziz Duaiq. The radio reported that Duaiq told Morgantini that he recognizes the 1967 borders, and that Morgantini concluded that he recognizes Israel.

Several media reported that Special Forces loyal to Abbas took over the Rafah crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. Israel Radio reported that during his upcoming visit to the PA, Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman will tell Palestinian PM Ismail Haniyeh that Egypt will act urgently to help the Palestinian population. The radio reported that Egyptian FM Ahmed Ali Abu al-Gheit has rejected Palestinian FM Mahmoud Zahar's request to visit Cairo.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah -- the most senior Roman Catholic clergyman in the Holy Land -- as saying during his Easter message Tuesday that Israel should initiate diplomatic relations with Hamas without preconditions.

Hatzofe and Israel Radio reported that Kadima and the Labor Party agreed during their coalition talks that there would be no referendum on Olmert's convergence plan. Major media reported that on Tuesday, Olmert told Kadima leaders that he sees no problem with appointing Yisrael Beiteinu Chairman Avigdor Lieberman as internal security minister, as long there is no legal impediment to doing so. The media noted that Lieberman has soured relations with the police. Yediot wrote that AG Menachem Mazuz will oppose Lieberman's appointment. Major media reported that Labor Party Chairman Amir Peretz now insists on being handed the treasury portfolio.

Yediot and The Jerusalem Post reported that two senior Israeli diplomats -- Deputy Foreign Ministry DG for Asia Amos Nadai and Israeli Ambassador to Thailand Yael Rubinstein -- visited Indonesia this week. They were invited to three UN conferences that took place in Indonesia.

Yediot reported that Israel will spend USD 9 million to renovate its London embassy.

Yediot cited a claim by the Islamist Mauritanian newspaper Al-Ittihad that Israeli Ambassador to Mauritania Boaz Bismuth is a Mossad agent.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post quoted Gerald Kaufman, a British MP from the Labour Party, as saying on Tuesday that sanctions should be imposed against Israel if it does not hand over those suspected of being responsible for the killing of two British citizens in 2003 -- peace activist Tom Hurndall and cinematographer James Miller. Kaufman is a frequent critic of Israel.

Yediot quoted a Newsweek source as saying that Olmert violated a promise to its reporter Lally Weymouth to grant an exclusive interview to the magazine and to The Washington Post.

Ha'aretz ran a feature on two refugees from Darfur who spent several months in an Israeli jail and were later "adopted" by a family in the Negev kibbutz of Tse'elim.

Yediot reported that Israeli filmmaker Haim Bouzaglo's movie "Janem, Janem" won four prizes at the Syracuse, New York, Film Festival.

I. Iran: Nuclear Program:

Summary:

Military correspondent Amir Rappaport wrote in pluralist, popular Maariv: "In effect the Iranians are playing a cruel game of poker against the entire world. They are going for broke."

Senior columnist Ron Ben-Yishai wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Bush, who is extremely entangled in Iraq, will find it hard to receive an OK from Congress for an offensive against Iran's nuclear and missile installations without an explicit UN Security Council resolution."

Block Quotes:

I. "Iran's Poker Game"

Military correspondent Amir Rappaport wrote in pluralist, popular Maariv (April 12): "The statement by the Iranian President on Tuesday should be viewed in the context of its battle against the international community. In effect the Iranians are playing a cruel game of poker against the entire world. They are going for broke. On the one hand they took a tough, significant step on Tuesday, which will force the not necessarily united international community to devise an appropriate response. But from the other side, the Iranian move was also a result of the powerful international pressure which is being put on them. Until Tuesday, the Iranians were careful to keep their cards much closer to their chest. They possessed planned credibility. So long as they never disclosed what stage they had reached in their nuclear program, the West, including Israel, always suspected that they might be further ahead with it than Western intelligence thought. On Tuesday, it emerged that the intelligence estimates were right, but the moment the Iranians showed their cards, they had to expect that the West would react. The question is which side will blink first."

II. "The Day Iran Gets the Bomb"

Senior columnist Ron Ben-Yishai wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (April 12): "Only one power in the world -- the United States -- is capable of carrying out and leading a complex and dangerous offensive [against Iran].... But without the US leading that move, this won't happen. The problem is that Bush, who is extremely entangled in Iraq, will

find it hard to receive an OK from Congress for an offensive against Iran's nuclear and missile installations without an explicit UN Security Council resolution granting legitimacy to that operation. This is also the reason why the US won't make such a move without many other countries actively taking part in it. Only a broad-based coalition would grant Bush international legitimacy for attacking Iran. The US will also need the international community's assistance following the offensive in order to impede the terrorist offensive that Iran will start in response to that operation."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

Liberal columnist Gideon Samet wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz: "It looks like a slow-motion image of a crash. Here's Ehud Olmert and Kadima driving into a foreseeable accident."

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman commented in Ha'aretz: "The settlers have reached that point in time where they ... must realize their role is over."

Block Quotes:

II. "A Government on a Collision Course"

Liberal columnist Gideon Samet wrote in left-leaning, independent Ha'aretz (April 12): "It looks like a slow-motion image of a crash. Here's Ehud Olmert and Kadima driving into a foreseeable accident.... Olmert is striving for a big government.... The man who succeeded Ariel Sharon regards it as his duty to provide the legacy a broad base. The price is high and risky. The convergence has been watered down, like an ink drop in a bowl of water.... The government's difficult path ... begins with mendacity about conducting a serious discussion with the other side, and it will continue with the refusal of [Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor] Lieberman and Shas to agree to broader withdrawals after the illusion of that negotiation is exposed.... Leaders greater than [Olmert] made huge mistakes."

II. "Pouring Out Their Rage"

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman commented in Ha'aretz (April 12): "Olmert ... correctly diagnosed the mood of the settlers and is right to try to reach an understanding with them before he imposes upon them the (partial) withdrawal from the West Bank, which, he says, will be the centerpiece of his government's activity. The move is becoming imperative, if not urgent, in light of the timetable he drew at the beginning of the week: To complete the execution of the disengagement plan within two years. But he should know how to set a limit: to listen to the settlers, but not fawn before them. In the winding and cruel loop that the minister of history is drawing, the settlers have reached that point in time where they also must realize their role is over. Their status as the most precious offspring of the Israeli establishment has been turned into something else -- the accepted convention that they are actually a bone in its throat. That was true in Gush Katif and it is just as true in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank]."

13. Aftermath of Italian Elections:

Summary:

Former Israeli Ambassador to Italy Avi Pazner wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "From Israel's point of view, Berlusconi was a loyal friend.... If Prodi does indeed form the new government, Israel will have to work hard to preserve this level of friendly relations."

Block Quotes:

"Forecast: New Italian Government Will Be Cooler to Israel"

Former Israeli Ambassador to Italy Avi Pazner wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (April 12): "From Israel's point of view, Berlusconi was a loyal

friend and supported Israel's position consistently throughout the years of his tenure, both in the governing bodies of the European Union and in the international arena. He forged strong bonds of friendship with Ariel Sharon, and they were in the habit of holding telephone conversations and coordinating their positions. If Prodi does indeed form the new government, Israel will have to work hard to preserve this level of friendly relations. It is possible that the new coalition will include parties with positions less convenient for Israel than those of the parties in Berlusconi's government. On the other hand, among Prodi's colleagues there are people known for their pro-Israeli views, such as Francesco Rutelli, chairman of the Margarita party, Piero Fassino, leader of the Democrats of the Left, and the highly influential mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni. If Israel is wise enough to foster lines of communication with these people, it will certainly be possible to preserve the good relations between Israel and Italy."

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